Historic, Archive Document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

1.942
F5Su31
DEC 3 1941

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Agricultural Marketing Service

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE COOPERATION OF A HOMEMAKERS' GROUP IN THE STUDY OF CONSUMER ACCEPTANCE OF U. S. GRADE LABELED CANNED FOODS

The objectives of this cooperative study are to determine consumers' reactions to canned foods packed under continuous factory inspection--an experiment now being conducted by the Agricultural Marketing Service of the U. S. Department of Agriculture--and to determine their reactions to the U. S. grade labeling of canned foods.

F.A.A. BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS

We wish to emphasize the importance of conducting the study objectively, without the slightest effort to influence the customer's opinion and to prejudice her in favor of U. S. grade labeled canned foods.

The details of local studies of consumer acceptance of U. S. grade labeled canned foods are left flexible by the Agricultural Marketing Service. This is done so that the individual study may be adapted to local conditions, to the personnel available to assist in the study, to the educational objectives of the local cooperating homemakers group, and to local market conditions.

PLANS FOR THE STUDY

A home demonstration agent or some other qualified home economist should be in charge of local plans for the study of consumer acceptance of U. S. grade labeled canned foods. Various questions as to the details of a consumer study will have to be answered as the leader explores local possibilities. The intensiveness of the study will be influenced largely by the ability and experience of the homemakers who are working with the leader and by the amount of time they wish to devote to the study.

Activities for Members of Homemakers' Group

1. As soon as the group has decided to participate in a cooperative consumer study, the Agricultural Marketing Service of the U. S. Department of Agriculture should be notified so that materials can be sent for use in conferences with the managers of stores invited to participate in the study.

2. Members of the homemakers group should familiarize themselves with significant information concerning grades for canned fruits and vegetables, grade labeling, and the continuous factory inspection experiment of the Agricultural Marketing Service in order that they may be prepared to answer questions of store customers and others.

3. Preliminary conferences should be begun with the managers of the stores you wish to have participate in the study, and arrangements should be made with them for special exhibits in their stores of U. S. and non-U. S. grade labeled canned foods during the period of the study. As soon as cooperating stores are selected, their names should be reported to the Agricultural Marketing Service. Selected members of homemakers groups might aid the leader in carrying forward the various plans to be made with the managers of cooperating stores.

4. Special arrangements should be made with the management of the store regarding any homemakers who are to spend time in the store observing customers' reactions. These individuals:

Might be silent observers of customers who manifest interest in the exhibit of U. S. grade and non-U. S. grade labeled canned foods.

Might answer questions customers voluntarily ask concerning the exhibit. The representatives of the homemakers group should, however, endeavor to give objective answers concerning the U. S. and the non-U. S. grade labeled products in the exhibit and try not to prejudice the customers in favor of either.

Might seek actively to interest customers in the exhibit and to point out the agency responsible for quality statements on the labels of the U. S. graded and the non-U. S. graded canned foods.

5. In more intensive studies, qualified homemakers might interview a selected list of those who have purchased and used the U. S. grade labeled canned foods to learn how these women have liked the food they purchased, what they think of the U. S. grade labeling of canned foods, and if they would sometimes like to select U. S. Grade A and at other times U. S. Grade B or C, if the lower grades were correspondingly lower in price.

6. Compile data from questions answered by customers who have purchased a can of U. S. grade labeled food. Each of these customers will be given a return postal card (to be provided by the Agricultural Marketing Service) and invited to take it home and answer a few questions regarding the U. S. grade labeled food after the can has been opened. The cards will be keyed so that all those coming from a given locality may be sent to the local leader in charge of the survey for such tabulation and study as may be desired.

7. File with the Agricultural Marketing Service a summary of data from the returned postal cards and such other results of the study as are available.

Responsibilities in Relation to Cooperating Stores

1. Stores should be selected to cooperate in the study whose managers are interested in participating in the study and have U. S. grade labeled canned foods in stock or are willing and able to obtain them. (The Agricultural Marketing Service and its field representatives are available to assist in making arrangements for securing this merchandise.) In order to obtain a representative cross section of consumers, it is desirable that stores be selected, when possible, in communities of different economic levels, or a stratification of economic levels may be approximated by the customers of different types of stores. The customers of super-markets are said to represent all levels, with a preponderance of lower income customers.

2. Arrangements with the managers of the stores will be necessary to insure the proper display in the store of the U. S. grade labeled canned foods. This display would probably involve featuring, in successive periods of one or two weeks, the various products such as canned peaches, apricots, cherries, pears, grapefruit, and corn. Counter displays should include the U. S. grade labeled canned commodity alongside the non-U. S. grade labeled commodity at a similar price and of approximately equal quality. Displays should include special counter cards to attract the attention of customers to the merchandise.

Suggestions and illustrative material relative to displays of the U. S. grade labeled canned foods will be available from the Agricultural Marketing Service. These will include one or more photographs of a store display for the guidance of the local store managers in arranging their displays.

3. A plan should be adopted in the store whereby each customer who purchases a U. S. grade labeled canned food will be given a return postal card. The postal card could be handed direct to the customer by the clerk or by a representative of the homemakers' group, if one is present in the store, or clerks could be instructed to wrap one of the postal cards with each purchase which includes a can of the grade labeled food.

Publicity

Newspaper, radio, and other publicity concerning the study is usually desirable. The extent and timing of news stories will be influenced by the way the study is to be developed.

It may be decided to introduce the consumer study by giving wide publicity to the cooperation of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, the local homemakers' group, and the participating retail stores.

On the other hand, no stories would be given out at first if it is decided to have a preliminary period with consumers' attention called to the U. S. grade labeled products only by the canned foods exhibited in the store and by counter cards. This introductory period might then be followed by a period during which wider publicity is given to the availability of the U. S. grade labeled canned foods and to the significance of the U. S. grade.

After the results of the study have been summarized, interesting facts should be released in a final news story of the study.